

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4739

INFO USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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AMEMBASSY BONN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, BE

SUBJECT: TINDEMANS CHOOSES TECHNOCRAT AS NEW ECONOMICS MINISTER

SUMMARY. PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS HAS AVOIDED A MAJOR RESHUFFLE OF HIS YEAR-OLD CABINET BY CHOOSING AN ECONOMICS PROFESSOR CAST IN THE POLITICAL MOLD OF THE LATE ANDRE OLEFFE AS OLEFFE'S SUCCESSOR. MINISTER-DESIGNATE IS FERNAND HERMAN, DIRECTOR OF A BRUSSELS ECONOMICS

INSTITUTE, PROFESSOR AT LOUVAIN, MEMBER OF AND ADVISOR TO FRANCOPHONE WING OF TINDEMANS' SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY. CONTROLLING POLITICAL MOTIVE IN HERMANS ELECTION WAS TINDEMANS' DESIRE TO KEEP SHIP OF STATE STEADY ON COURSE. END SUMMARY.  
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1. PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS ACTED WITH UNEXPECTED SPEED LAST WEEK

TO FILL THE GAP IN HIS GOVERNMENT TEAM LEFT BY THE DEATH OF ECONOMICS MINISTER ANDRE OLEFFE. THIRTY-SIX HOURS AFTER LATTER'S INTERMENT TINDEMANS AND 43-YEAR-OLD ECONOMICS PROFESSOR FERNAND HERMAN PAID MIDNIGHT CALL FRIDAY AT LAEKEN PALACE TO OBTAIN KING'S FORMAL APPROVAL

OF NEW MINISTER. HERMAN TOOK OVER ECONOMICS MINISTRY TODAY.

2. POLITICALLY HERMAN BEARS MANY OF THE SAME MARKS THAT DISTINGUISHED THE MAN HE SUCCEEDS. LIKE OLEFFE HE IS A MEMBER OF PSC (FRANCOPHONE WING OF GOVERNING SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY) BUT NOT A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT. LIKE OLEFFE HE STANDS ON LEFT FLANK OF THE PARTY WITH TIES

TO THE CHRISTIAN LABOR MOVEMENT. LIKE OLEFFE HE IS NEVERTHELESS RESPECTED IN COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL QUARTERS AS A SOUND ECONOMIST AND ABLE ADMINISTRATOR.

3. PRESS REPORTS AGREE THAT HERMAN WAS SECOND CHOICE OF TINDEMANS, WHO FIRST SOUGHT AN EVEN MORE PERFECT MIRROR IMAGE OF OLEFFE. THIS WAS JEAN HALLET, LIKEWISE A POLITICALLY ACTIVE TECHNICIAN, WHO IS VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE CHRISTIAN LABOR MOVEMENT AND SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CHRISTIAN MUTUAL INSURANCE ORGANIZATION. THESE TWO AGENCIES ARE KEY COMPONENTS OF PSC'S FINANCIAL/ORGANIZATION INFRASTRUCTURE.

4. ACCORDING TO UNDISPUTED PRESS ACCOUNTS HALLET, WHO IS A KEY FIGURE IN PSC DECISION-MAKING, REFUSED TINDEMANS' OFFER AND THREW HIS INFLUENCE BEHIND HERMAN. HALLET IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO GIVE UP HIS TWO PRESENT POSTS, WHICH ARE BOTH POLITICAL POWER POSITIONS AND IMPORTANT EXECUTIVE JOBS. OPPOSITION COMMENTATORS CLAIM TO KNOW THAT HALLET WAS UNWILLING TO SIGN ON WITH A TINDEMANS GOVERNMENT HE EXPECTS TO FALL BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

5. IN CHOOSING A TECHNICIAN WITHOUT AN INDEPENDENT POWER BASE TINDEMANS AVOIDED A MAJOR CABINET RESHUFFLE WHICH MIGHT HAVE DISTURBED THE EXISTING INTERNAL STABILITY OF HIS GOVERNMENT. PRESS REPORTS THAT THREE "HEAVY" MEMBERS OF HIS CABINET WERE MANEUVERING FOR THE JOB WHICH WAS SO ABRUPTLY FILLED. THESE WERE MINISTER OF LABOR AND WALLONIAN AFFAIRS JOSEPH CALIFICE (PSC), DEFENSE MINISTER VANDEN BOEYNANTS (PSC) AND HEALTH MINISTER JOS DE SAEGER (CVP). A SHIFT OF ANY OF THESE TO ECONOMICS PORTFOLIO WOULD HAVE SIGNALLED SEVERAL MORE CABINET SHIFTS TO RESTORE POLITICAL, GEOGRAPHICAL AND LINGUISTIC LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BALANCE IN THE GOVERNMENT. END UNCLASSIFIED. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.

6. COMMENT: TINDEMANS MOVED WITH EXCEPTIONAL SPEED WITH THE OBVIOUS INTENTION OF CUTTING OFF THE POLITICAL INFIGHTING WHICH HAD ALREADY BEGUN AND WHICH HE SAW AS POTENTIALLY THREATENING TO THE STABILITY OF HIS GOVERNMENT. HIS SWIFT ACTION DISAPPOINTED SOME OPPOSITION SOCIALIST

PARTY LEADERS, WHO HAD SEEN OLEFFE'S DEATH AS OPPORTUNITY TO OPEN  
QUESTION OF SOCIALIST ENTRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT. AS IT STAND NOW,  
TINDEMANS GOVERNMENT REMAINS STEADY ON COURSE. BUT ECONOMIC AND  
SOCIAL ROCKS AND SHOALS, MADE MORE MENACING BY BELGIUM'S UNMASTERED  
RECESSION, STILL LIE AHEAD AND WILL PUT TINDEMANS TO A SEVERE TEST  
THIS AUTUMN. SEE SEPTTEL FOR PERSONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL PROFILE  
OF NEW MINISTER. RENNER

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## Message Attributes

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**To:** STATE  
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